



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

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MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF HEADQUARTERS ELEMENTS OPERATIONS AND FIELD OFFICES MANAGERS POWER MARKETING ADMINISTRATORS

FROM: FEDERICO F. PEÑA *Federico Peña*

SUBJECT: TIMELY NOTIFICATION OF EMERGENCIES AND
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Prompt recognition of the significance of events at Departmental facilities and the subsequent timely notifications of these events to all relevant parties are vital to worker and public health and safety and to the public trust. Recent occurrences at a number of sites indicate continuing difficulties throughout the DOE complex with respect to both the timeliness of event recognition and notifications. The delays in notifying State and other outside agencies and Headquarters of events in facilities, both emergency and non-emergency, have been attributed to: confusion with respect to Departmental notification requirements; attempts to gather detailed information before making initial notification; inadequate emergency event classification procedures; and, inadequate training of the individual responsible for event classification. In several instances, common sense was overridden by a legalistic interpretation of Department Orders.

I want to reinforce to all DOE senior management the importance of timely event recognition and notification. They are vital, both for communication and coordination during emergencies and for the Department's credibility and proper management in non-emergencies that require top management attention. Failure to notify all appropriate DOE and non-DOE officials will not be tolerated. Even when in doubt as to the applicability of standing guidance related to a specific event, notify state, local, and tribal officials and the Headquarters Operations Center.

Timely event recognition and timely notifications are addressed in DOE Order 151.1, "Comprehensive Emergency Management System," and DOE Order 232.1A, "Occurrence Reporting and Processing of Operations Information." Both orders require DOE facilities to prepare local procedures to recognize and report emergency and non-emergency situations to appropriate DOE and other organizations. I expect all of you to exercise leadership to ensure proper emergency and other event reporting, and to exercise judgment to ensure that the Department's leadership is kept informed of events that require or may require top management attention. Our conduit for event notification is the Headquarters Operations Center, which can reach me or my designee 24 hours a day.

I expect each field manager to take appropriate actions to strengthen our performance in this vital area. Toward that end, I am issuing the attached directive. Questions regarding implementation of the directive should be addressed to the Office of Nonproliferation and National Security's Office of Emergency Management on (202) 586-9892.

NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING PROCEDURES
FOR EMERGENCY AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

The following actions are directed by the Secretary to be taken immediately to improve the process for timely notification of emergency and other significant events at all of the Department's sites and facilities:

1. Within 30 days of the date of the accompanying memorandum, Managers of Operations and Field Offices will: 1) review the criteria (e.g., emergency action levels) used to determine emergency and significant event recognition and categorization to ensure that all reasonable event indicators are adequately covered by procedures and that procedures reflect an expeditious process; 2) review training procedures and conduct "refresher" training and drills for personnel responsible for event categorization, notification, or reporting, to ensure that these personnel fully understand the Departmental emphasis on timely event classification and notification; and, 3) solicit the comment of other Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies regarding timely notification of all events of concern. Within 15 days of the completion of the preceding actions, Managers shall report to the Director of the Office of Nonproliferation and National Security on their reviews and actions taken. Questions and requests for assistance should be directed to the Office of Emergency Management. The Director of the Office of Nonproliferation and National Security shall summarize Managers' findings and actions in a report to the Deputy Secretary within 60 days of the accompanying memorandum.
2. The Office of Emergency Management will undertake an immediate review of emergency action levels and associated event categorization criteria at all of the Department's facilities with the potential for significant offsite consequences from radiological and non-radiological hazardous materials. This review should be completed within 30 days of the date of the accompanying memorandum and forwarded to the Deputy Secretary.

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3. Managers of Operations and Field Offices will include the status of refresher training and drills for all personnel responsible for event categorization, notification, or reporting in their Emergency Readiness Assurance Plans, which are submitted annually to the Office of Emergency Management for inclusion in the Annual Report on the Status of the Department's Emergency Management System.
4. When issued in final on October 1, 1997, the Emergency Management Guide Volume 3, including "Categorization and Classification of Operational Emergencies" (Chapter 3) will consolidate all guidance related to notifications.

The following guidance clarifies and summarizes notification and reporting procedures with two new, critical elements. These new elements are: the requirement to notify state, local, and tribal officials and the Headquarters Operations Center even when in doubt as to the applicability of standing guidance related to a specific event; and implementation of a new threshold of reporting requiring immediate notification for non emergency significant events.

- **EMERGENCIES:**

Oral notification of all emergencies is to be made immediately to the Headquarters Operations Center and state, tribal and local officials in accordance with DOE O 151.1, "Comprehensive Emergency Management System," applicable regulations, ordinances, and mutual agreements. Other Federal agencies are to be notified in accordance with DOE O 151.1 and applicable regulations. Managers of Operations and Field Offices should ensure that emergency notification procedures to offsite agencies contain provisions for confirming receipt of the notification by appropriate personnel and not, for example, by answering machines.

In accordance with DOE O 151.1, emergencies are to be declared at DOE sites and facilities when events represent a significant degradation in the level of safety and require urgent response efforts from outside the facility. In addition, through training and drills, personnel must become accustomed to using common sense in making judgements about

the need for notification and the urgency of notifications. Events that represent a specific threat to workers and/or the public due to the release or potential release of significant quantities of radiological and non-radiological hazardous materials should be further classified as Alert, Site Area, or General Emergencies in order of increasing severity. Specific guidance is available in the Emergency Management Guide, Volume III, Chapter 3, "Categorization and Classification of Operational Emergencies," July 1997 (Draft), and in "Guidance for Event Classification and Emergency Action Levels," June 1992.

- NON EMERGENCIES

Oral notification of ALL non-emergency significant events is to be made immediately to the Headquarters Operations Center and State and local officials are to be notified in accordance with applicable regulations, ordinances, and mutual agreements. Other Federal agencies are to be notified in accordance with applicable regulations. In addition, through training and drills, personnel must become accustomed to using common sense in making judgements about the need for notification and the urgency of notifications. Managers of Operations and Field Offices should ensure that emergency notification procedures to offsite agencies contain provisions for confirming receipt of the notification by appropriate personnel and not, for example, by answering machines.

Non-emergency significant events may include unusual occurrences (see DOE O 232.1A, "Occurrence Reporting and Processing of Operations Information") such as: explosions, serious fires, building evacuations or other personnel protective actions, fatality or multiple injuries, release of radioactive and non-radioactive materials in excess of permits or requirements, doses or exposures above established statutory limits, bomb-related incidents, sabotage, loss of special nuclear material, disruption of operations (e.g., weather-related). In addition, any occurrence that may result in a significant concern by the affected state, tribal, local officials, press, or general population or could damage the credibility of the Department

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or that may result in inquiries to Headquarters are to be reported immediately.

- Oral notifications are to be succinct, and provide, when available, the following information: 1) a description of the occurrence; identify injuries to personnel, environmental releases and/or personnel exposures, protective actions implemented, include numbers when possible; 2) the location of the facility or incident; 3) an indication of whether the occurrence is over or is still in progress; 4) the name and call back number of person reporting the occurrence; 5) the time of occurrence; and, 6) what other notifications have been made, including media interest.
- When information, including event categorization, is not immediately available for the oral notification, the caller should identify who has responsibility for making the categorization, what specific information is needed, and when the additional information is estimated to be available.
- Upon receipt of this information, the Operations Center will notify the cognizant program office and the Office of the Secretary and make other required notifications.

Specific guidance is available in the Emergency Management Guide, Volume III, Chapter 3, "Categorization and Classification of

Operational Emergencies," July 1997 (Draft), and in "Guidance for Event Classification and Emergency Action Levels," June 1992.

Taken together, these actions should significantly strengthen Departmental performance in the area of timely event recognition, categorization, and notification.